



Your Wellbeing Guide

Inside your free guide:

- Tips on looking after your wellbeing
- Ways to keep in touch
- Spiritual support

Wellbeing
+ Selfcare & Health
+ Stay connected
+ Spiritual support

It all adds up to

Livability



Welcome

Welcome to Livability's wellbeing guide. My name is Emma and I'm responsible for Livability's wellbeing services, based at Livability Holton Lee in Dorset. I have over 20 years experience of supporting people to improve their wellbeing and I love seeing the transformation of people who take part in our therapeutic programmes.

I strongly believe that it's really important to look after our wellbeing and, with all the challenges we currently face, I wanted to share some top tips and approaches that might help you at this time. I hope you enjoy reading this guide and it helps you to find your own path to happiness and wellbeing.



Emma Browning
Wellbeing Programmes
Manager

Looking after your mental health and wellbeing

Life can be a delicate balancing act between competing elements that we need to dedicate time and energy towards – such as work, family, relationships, health, and finances.

Often, especially in periods of transition or uncertainty, we can forget about ourselves in the process and as a result our mental wellbeing can fall by the wayside.

There are a few simple things that you can do to help keep your wellbeing on track and maintain resilience through challenging periods:

Keep a routine

Planning out how you'll spend your time each day can be really useful. For instance, thinking about what time you'll get up, what activities you'll be doing that day and what time you might have your meals? It might help to write this down and keep it somewhere that you can refer to it throughout the day. Keeping to a routine can be especially helpful during uncertain times to help you prioritise both your physical and mental health.

Monitor your news intake

Even though watching the news can make you feel more in control, overconsumption can negatively affect mental health. Negative news can trigger the body to release stress hormones and, over time, this can significantly impact mood and increase anxiety levels.

Schedule in time for news updates and be vigilant by making sure that you are getting your news from trusted sources such as GOV.UK or the NHS. Spend some time seeking out and reflecting on the good news happening in your community and the wider world, to help address the balance.

Top Tip: Consider turning off the news alerts on your phone.

Be kind

In every act of kindness, there is the potential for one person to feel supported and the other to feel valued and useful. So it can help everyone feel better! Plus, acts of kindness can increase dopamine and serotonin levels, which are the hormones that are linked to happiness. Reflect on the kindness in your life and plan some more kind acts for the future.

Top Tip: Try doing each of these things over the course of the next week:

- ✓ Remind a friend of their best qualities
- ✓ Call someone you know is feeling lonely
- ✓ Pay someone a compliment
- ✓ Put out a bowl of water for the birds

Ask for help

This can be challenging at times, especially when it is something you are not accustomed to doing. Asking for help can sometimes makes us feel vulnerable and weak and therefore many of us chose to struggle on in silence instead.

However, asking for help is in fact a great sign of courage and few people can function without help from others in some capacity. It strengthens relationships and it builds community, so if asking for help is something that is challenging for you, start small and it will get easier with practice.



Moving matters

Looking after our physical health can be hugely beneficial for our mental wellbeing. Getting the body moving releases happy hormones, plus it can help to bring routine and structure to your week.

Exercise doesn't need to be intense or time-consuming to have a positive effect on your overall wellbeing; just half an hour will make a big difference.

Dance or Sing

Dancing can be done almost anywhere and everywhere – just pop on some music and dance around while you are cooking, or you could even learn a choreographed routine online! Singing can be just as beneficial and has been shown to improve our sense of happiness and wellbeing.

Top Tip: If you're able to go online you could consider joining a group and sing together in a virtual choir.

Do household chores

Activities like hoovering, polishing, and mopping are all great ways to get your daily dose of exercise. Other activities such as DIY or home improvement projects can also be a good source of exercise for the body and mind.



Gardening

As many people have been stuck inside their homes during the coronavirus outbreak this year, it's no surprise that a new wave of gardeners have emerged across the country.

For those who are lucky enough to have access to a garden, it can be a great source of exercise whilst being outside. For those with no outdoor space, it's amazing what you can grow on a window sill.

Sheila's sense of purpose

As a nurse, Sheila had given her life to helping others. She loved being outdoors but one day she had a stroke and lost all movement in her legs. She couldn't speak and, with no family, she became very isolated.

Thankfully Sheila found Livability's horticultural therapy programme where gardening became a possibility again from her wheelchair.

Being able to garden again really has changed Sheila's life. It's given her a sense of purpose. It's helped her to maintain her fitness and given her new friends and the confidence she thought she'd lost.



Keeping in touch

Keeping in touch with loved ones is paramount for maintaining our wellbeing. Sometimes it is not possible to meet friends and family in person, so below are some top tips for maintaining those important relationships through these periods:

Develop your technology skills

Technology offers a huge range of ways that we can communicate with one another. Does your phone or computer have a camera on it? You could learn how to take a video and send it to a friend or family member. It could be anything – sharing something you have cooked, or a new flower that has come up in the garden. Videos enable you to share a moment of your day even if others aren't physically there and help you to stay connected.

Connect in new ways

For some people, staying inside the house for long periods can feel very lonely. The answer to loneliness is to find different ways to connect with others, even during those times when we don't feel that chatty. Challenge yourself to come up with new reasons for communicating with someone – perhaps you could read a bedtime story to a young family member or phone someone and do an online quiz together.

Send a letter

You could write a letter to send to a loved one through the post. It could be highly personalised and a wonderful surprise that lets the person you're writing to know you're thinking of them and miss them. The more letters and messages we send out, the better chance we have of getting something back and receiving a letter can really make someone's day.

Top Tip: Connect with someone you've been meaning to for a while.

How Peter stays connected

Peter suffered from a brain injury as a child and, as a result, has poor short-term memory. He lives at Livability's York House where he receives 24-hour specialist care. During the coronavirus pandemic, Peter's family were unable to visit him. To stay connected to his loved ones, the team at York House would arrange video calls for Peter to stay in touch with his relatives and made sure they sent regular updates. This has been vital in keeping Peter connected to his family and they've loved hearing how Peter is caring for the gardens at York House.



Spiritual support

Caring for our spiritual wellbeing can help us to find purpose and feel more connected to those around us. This in turn can increase our overall happiness. Many people find invaluable support for their wellbeing through their faith because it can:

Connect us to others

The community we reach through our church can be a great form of support. If you're not able to attend your local church in person or perhaps sign up to a service online, you could consider praying with someone over the phone and having a conversation about your own spiritual wellbeing.

Volunteering our time

Volunteering our time and skills to support others can boost our own wellbeing. Faith groups play a vital role in tackling barriers in community life. It could be worth exploring how your local church has changed during the last few months. Perhaps there could be an opportunity to volunteer with many churches now running food banks and other services supporting their local community.

Encourage reflection

Through reading scripture, and learning from those who journey before us in faith, we find our path through a changing landscape. Reflecting with others can help us to acknowledge uncertainty and process how we feel. In turn, this assists us in making choices consistent with our beliefs and values, which increases our wellbeing and ultimately our happiness. You could try building time for spiritual reflection into your regular practice.

Top Tip: Find a virtual community who could support you spiritually.



“I’m hopeful that in our changing world, finding new ways of being together will help us to share from our hearts, to open up our lives, to know each other more closely”

Elizabeth Harrison, Chaplaincy Manager at Livability



About Livability

Livability is the charity that supports people with disabilities to live a life that adds up for them. We tackle barriers that impact people with disabilities, to enable better wellbeing and participation for all. Delivering a wide range of care, education, vocation and rehabilitation services, we strive to grow community connections that help people thrive.

It all adds up to

Livability

Contact us

For more information contact Livability at
Livability, 6 Mitre Passage London SE10 0ER
Email us at supporter.services@livability.org.uk
Call us on 020 7452 2121

  LivabilityUK

With thanks to Paul Mitchell for supplying some of the images featured in this guide.

Livability is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee in England and Wales. Charity No: 1116530 and Company No: 5967087. Registered office: 6 Mitre Passage, London, SE10 0ER.

